

The Prince of Court-Poets

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He has left his malediction on the first
hunter that broke
that dignity of stillness with the yelp of
hounds. And
years at Court only intensified his fondness
for the
countryside. Though he smiled at Helene's
wistful long-
ing to escape, as she gazed through the
palace-window
out to the green fields round Montinartre,
he shared it
himself; till at one moment he breaks into a
passionate
cry to her, strange indeed on the lips of a
Court-poet, to
break the golden chain and flee with him
away to some
quiet obscurity:

Laisse de Pharaon la terre Egyptienne,
Terre de servitude, et vien sur le Jourdain:
Laisse moy cestc Cour, et tout ce fard
mondain,
Ta Circe, ta Sereine, et ta Magicienne,

Even the Noble Savage is no idea unknown
to him. Like
Montaigne, he has devoured the voyages of
Villegaignon;
like Rousseau, he laments Europe's poisoned
gift of
'civilisation' to the native. Even the savage
beauty of the
Alps excites him, two centuries and a half
before Words-
worth crossed the Simplon or Coleridge sang
of Chamonix;

le froid des Alpes haut-comues
Qui soustiennent le ciel de leurs croupes
chenues,
Nourrices de maint fleuve et de maint gros
torrent
A gros bouillons enflez descendant et courant,
Qui portent en tout temps sur leurs doz
solitaires
Les neiges, les frimats, les vents hereditaires.

How fine is the hint of immemorial nobility
in that one
last word!

But naturally his affection is deepest for the
countryside

that bred him in boyhood and saw, in youth,
his long low
for Cassandre—his own Venddmois, with its
Htde Lofr>
its long slopes of green vineyard and
yellowing com, ana
the long glades of that For6t dc Gastbic
against
destruction he wrote lines as splendid as
Dirge for the Mumter Fomt;